

1995 FAO CODE OF CONDUCT FOR RESPONSIBLE FISHERIES: INFORMATION IN SUPPORT OF SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION

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ABSTRACT: Largely from a developing country perspective, this paper reviews some issues relating to the information needs required to support the implementation of the 1995 FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and the challenges that these needs present for information professionals and centers. By way of introduction the paper commences with an examination of the rationale and process for the development of the Code of Conduct. It then addresses the nature and scope of the Code. Information constraints and their possible solutions is the subject of the next section. Actions by FAO to respond to these constraints are also discussed. Avenues for expanded information access for developing countries is the focus of the following section that notes, in part, the declining roles of fisheries extension services and national and regional information centers in many developing countries and the importance of non-government organizations in providing information to vulnerable stakeholder groups. The paper raises some issues and questions for further consideration by information professionals, suggesting that the International Association of Aquatic and Marine Science Libraries and Information Centers could provide a valuable forum to address fisheries information issues. The paper's conclusion challenges information professionals and centers to grasp the opportunities to work with new stakeholder groups and to be part of the promotion of responsible and sustainable fisheries, especially in developing countries where information deficiencies are a constraint to the implementation of the Code of Conduct.

KEYWORDS: 1995 FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries; fisheries management; fisheries information; fisheries instruments.

¹The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and they do not necessarily represent the views of FAO or any of its Members.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of a code of conduct for responsible fisheries² or a code of practice for the fisheries sector was first mooted at the Nineteenth Session of the Food and Agriculture Organization's Committee on Fisheries (COFI) in 1991 (FAO 1991) within the context of its deliberations concerning large-scale pelagic driftnet fishing.³ In this connection, COFI recognized that the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO):

“... had an important role to play in promoting international understanding about the responsible conduct of fishing operations and recommended that FAO should strengthen its work on gear selectivity and behavior of marine animals in relation to fishing gear particularly but not exclusively those types of fishing gear which are employed in high seas fisheries. Such technical work could result in the elaboration of guidelines or a code of practice for responsible fishing which would take into account all the technical, socio-economic and environmental factors involved.”

It was in this manner that the concept of, and the need for, a code of conduct for responsible fisheries was conceived.

Responding to the call from COFI for the promotion of responsible fishing on a global basis, the Government of Mexico in consultation with FAO organized the International Conference on Responsible Fishing in Cancún in May 1992.⁴ The objectives of this Conference were threefold.⁵ They were to:

- Attain consensus on the need to establish a fishing activities code of conduct which would lead towards responsible fishing principles and which would be observed by producer and consumer countries;
- Analyze the research and technological development needs for the best use of resources and their preservation, without damaging the environment, and

² In this paper the term “fisheries” includes, as appropriate, aquaculture.

³ *In the late 1980s, the use of large-scale pelagic drift-nets became a major issue in the South Pacific leading to the conclusion of the 1989 Convention for the Prohibition of Fishing with Long Driftnets in the South Pacific (Wellington Convention). It is intended to restrict and prohibit the use of drift nets in the South Pacific region in order to conserve marine living resources. in doing so the Parties agreed " ... to take measures not to encourage the use of drift nets by prohibiting their use and the transshipment of catches, by drift net processing or import of products to and from drift net catches and possession of drift nets and by restricting access of vessels using drift nets to ports. ..."* For a detailed discussion of the issues see Wright and Doulman (1991).

⁴ See Preamble by the Mexican Secretary of Fisheries to the unpublished report of the International Conference on Responsible Fishing.

⁵ The objectives of the Conference and its scope embraced fisheries issues on a broader basis.

to explore ways to attain technology transfer and technological and scientific cooperation; and

- Propose criteria to be used in defining the adequate approaches for responsible fishing and the commercial practices that could offer the consumer access to quality fish at a fair price.

The Conference was well attended with representatives from more than 60 countries and the European Community. In addition, representatives from key intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and regional fisheries management organizations (RFMOs) participated. The Conference considered a number of background papers focusing on the world's fisheries situation; fishery resources and their environment, management and development; fish capture activities, and fish trade.

The Conference adopted the Declaration of Cancún. It noted, inter alia, the vital need for fishing to continue and to develop within a comprehensive and balanced system under the concept of 'responsible fishing'. The Declaration further noted that this concept encompassed the sustainable utilization of fisheries resources in harmony with the environment; the use of capture and aquaculture practices that are not harmful to ecosystems, resources or their quality; the incorporation of added value to such products through transformation processes meeting the required sanitary standards, and the conduct of commercial practices so as to provide consumers access to good quality products. Furthermore, the Declaration urged States to implement a wide range of measures as a means of achieving sustainable fisheries. Finally, the Declaration, inter alia, called upon FAO, in consultation with relevant international organizations, to draft an International Code of Conduct for Responsible Fishing.⁶

Significantly, the Cancún Conference provided input to the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) that was held shortly after the Cancún Conference in June 1992. It also hastened significantly the process within FAO to address issues relating to responsible fisheries.

In 1993 the Twentieth Session of COFI noted that the FAO Council in November 1991 had endorsed the request made in the Declaration of Cancún for FAO to elaborate, in consultation with relevant international organizations, a Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (FAO 1993). COFI agreed that such a Code would be important for achieving sustainable fisheries development. At the same time COFI expressed satisfaction that FAO would contribute in a technical and scientific capacity to the UN Fish Stocks Conference. This Conference, proposed by UNCED, had its initial meeting in late 1992

⁶ The initial thrust of the debate on responsible fishing focused on the harvesting sub-sector. However, it was soon realized that a code of practice, if it was to be successful, should address all activities in the fisheries sector. Consequently, the title of the Code was changed from 'fishing' to 'fisheries' following the conclusion of the Cancún Conference so as the real purpose and intent of the proposed Code would be reflected.

and extended in a series of negotiations sessions from 1993 to 1995. COFI also agreed that the negotiation of the 1993 FAO Compliance Agreement (FAO 1995) should be kept on a 'fast track', while reiterating that vessel flagging and re-flagging issues would be among the issues to be covered by the Code.⁷

The scope and the process of elaboration of the Code were major items for discussion at the 1995 Twenty-first Session of COFI. The Committee stressed the importance of the Code as an instrument to support the implementation of the 1982 Convention on the Law of the Sea (1982 Convention) (UN 1983) as well as UNCED's fisheries outcomes. COFI also noted that technical guidelines would be developed by FAO to support and facilitate the Code's implementation (FAO 1995a). The 1995 FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (FAO 1995b) was adopted unanimously by the FAO Conference in October 1995.

The Code's elaboration was largely achieved through open-ended technical working groups. All of these working groups met at FAO Headquarters in Rome.⁸ Open-ended groups were convened to encourage wider participation in the negotiation process. Importantly, recognizing the financial difficulty that many developing countries had in participating in the work of these groups, FAO supported the participation of some countries at meetings so as to maintaining regional representation and balance.⁹ Moreover, in the elaboration process closer relations between FAO and international NGOs were encouraged and forged. Many of the NGOs made sustained and important technical contributions to the elaboration process, even though the initial meetings were a little circumspect as many Fisheries Department staff and country representatives had not previously worked so closely with NGOs on mainstream FAO fisheries issues. However, this more open posture in the negotiations and the enhanced transparency was highly appreciated both by FAO Members and NGOs.

At the 1997 Twenty-second Session of COFI, the Code was addressed as a substantive item. In considering this item the Committee focused, to a significant extent, on securing funding to support the implementation of the Code in developing countries and on monitoring and reporting on its implementation. With regard to these matters COFI agreed that progress reports should be presented to the Committee at each session. These

⁷The 1993 FAO Compliance Agreement, the four international Plans of Action and the Strategy are not discussed in this paper even though they are integral parts of the Code of Conduct.

⁸ While all the working groups were held at FAO Headquarters in Rome, FAO did avail itself of the opportunity to convene briefing sessions for countries and non-governmental organizations in New York at the UN Headquarters when Session of the Fish Stocks Conference were in progress.

⁹ During the negotiation process, specific local, national, sub-regional and global issues were diluted, or perhaps even avoided in the negotiation process, with a view to finding acceptable global compromises, and ultimately consensus, on a wide range of difficult and controversial issues. Therefore, when considering the implementation of the Code, which must be geared to meet particular national circumstances and requirements, some adaptation is likely to be needed. However, it is stressed that such adaptation should not violate the letter or spirit of the Code.

reports should address achievements and progress with implementation. Through the use of self-assessment questionnaires, governments, RFMOs and civil society organizations would be requested to provide information every two years to FAO on progress and constraints being encountered in implementing the Code. This information would then be incorporated into a consolidated report for COFI. Since 1997 each COFI session has addressed the implementation of the Code of Conduct and it is anticipated that it will continue to do so in future.¹⁰

NATURE AND SCOPE

The Code of Conduct is a soft-law, non-binding instrument with its principles, norms and standards rooted firmly in the 1982 Convention. The Code is a unique international instrument that seeks to place all fisheries and aquaculture and their related activities on a long-term sustainable footing.

The Code's scope is broad and comprehensive. It prescribes principles and standards for structural adjustment in the fisheries sector. The Code has 12 articles.¹¹ Articles 6 to 12 are the substantive articles of the Code. These Articles address:

- Article 6 General Principles;
- Article 7 Fisheries Management;
- Article 8 Fishing Operations;
- Article 9 Aquaculture Development;
- Article 10 Integration of Fisheries into Coastal Area Management;
- Article 11 Post-harvest Practices and Trade; and
- Article 12 Fisheries Research.

¹⁰ At the Twenty-sixth Session of COFI in 2005 some FAO Members noted that they faced a heavy reporting burden on the Code of Conduct (FAO 2005). A proposal was made by the Secretariat that detailed in depth analysis be undertaken every four years, alternating with a general overview report on implementation every two years. However, this decision was left to be finalized at the next Session of COFI. Interestingly, two of the countries that opposed most vigorously the change in reporting on the Code had not contributed to the most recent FAO report to COFI. In addition to the reporting burden, some countries, both developing and developed, have indicated that they are encountering difficulties in implementing the post-UNCED fisheries instruments. For this reason they have called on the international community not to conclude further instruments at this stage and to focus on a "decade of implementation" to ensure that effect is given to existing instruments. For an analysis of these issues see Cochrane and Doulman (2005).

¹¹ FAO Conference Resolution 4/95, recalling Article 5 of the Code, urged that the special requirements of developing countries be taken into account in implementing its provisions. The resolution also requested FAO to elaborate an inter-regional programme for external assistance for these countries. The purpose of this programme would be to target the upgrading of developing countries' capabilities so that they would be better placed to meet their responsibilities under the Code. This FAO Conference request was met through FAO elaborating the Interregional Programme of Assistance to Developing Concerns for the Implementation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, which later became known as FishCode.

The Code of Conduct encourages an ‘inclusive approach’ to implementation, involving States, inter-governmental organizations (IGOs), NGOs and all those associated with fisheries. FAO’s role is to promote implementation and, in accordance with Article 4, to monitor and report to COFI. However, given FAO’s status as a UN specialized agency, primary responsibility for implementation rests with governments, which should provide leadership and foster an enabling environment to facilitate implementation in partnership with stakeholders.

To ensure that it remains a ‘living document’ and relevant to changing conditions in the fisheries sector, Article 4 of the Code provides for it to be updated. Since 1995 there have been no requests to change the Code, a situation that probably reflects its breadth of application and comprehensiveness. As the need arises technical guidelines have been developed in FAO, and will continue to be developed, to support the Code’s implementation. These guidelines range from topics addressing fisheries management, aquaculture development, precautionary approach to fisheries, use of vessel monitoring systems, and fishing operations. The purpose of the guidelines is to provide ‘hands on’ advice to fisheries managers and administrators on how to implement the Code in particular technical areas. To assist with the dissemination of these guidelines, some of them are being translated into simple language versions to reach fishers with limited education and village groups.

INFORMATION CONSTRAINTS AND SOLUTIONS

The Code of Conduct requires a range of information to support its implementation.¹² A recent and comprehensive study by Webster and Collins (2005) on fisheries information needs in developing countries to support the implementation of the Code of Conduct states that a lack of information continues to constrain its full and effective implementation. It is not envisaged that this situation will change dramatically over at least the medium term.

The findings presented by Webster and Collins (2005) are borne out by information reported to FAO and COFI in the three questionnaires, referred to above, between 2001 and 2005. Over this period FAO has been able to obtain a clear indication of the national information constraints restricting the implementation of the Code. These constraints include:

- insufficient copies of the Code and its technical guidelines being available for distribution within countries. This has hampered the dissemination of

¹² A significant ancillary consideration, argued by Garcia and Doulman (2005), is that the implementation of the Code of Conduct will also serve to implement many of the fisheries outcomes of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation agreed at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (UN 2003).

the Code to some groups of stakeholders, particularly to small-scale fishers, fish workers and fishing communities.

- a lack of understanding, knowledge and awareness about the principal aspects and purpose of the Code both by government officials and stakeholders.
- a lack of local languages versions of the Code.
- inadequate information and limited access to information on best practices to support the Code's implementation,¹³ including through government extension services.
- a general lack of information about species being managed (especially species subject to multi-species management), lack of reliable information and data on indicators, lack of social and economic studies, lack of statistical coverage and difficulties in collecting and analyzing data.

To address these information-related constraints countries in their questionnaire responses pointed to the need to:

- increase the number of copies of the Code and technical guidelines available within countries for dissemination.
- increase educational and outreach activities about the Code including through the use of audiovisual aids, media campaigns and pictorial representations.
- mount meetings and training events to promote awareness about the Code.
- translate the Code and its technical guidelines into local languages.
- present the Code at major national and international fisheries and aquaculture industry events as a means of continuing to reinforce the importance of the Code for the fisheries sector and as a means of maintaining momentum towards its implementation.

Within its competence and available resources FAO has sought to respond to the constraints identified by countries. In doing so, FAO has had benefited from their guidance on the types of measures that might be taken to alleviate the constraints. To this end FAO has initiated steps to ensure that:

- documents relating to the Code of Conduct such as "What is the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries?" a simple language explanation of the Code are widely available. FAO has translated this document into the five FAO official languages and supported its translation in more than 30 local

¹³ The 2003 report to COFI noted in part that the management of fishing capacity and the implementation of the Code of Conduct and its international plans of action (IPOAs) and the development of national plans of action (NPOAs) were facilitated when governments had a clear vision for their fisheries and efforts were made to acquire sufficient and timely information and data.

languages, mainly in Asia and the Pacific Islands, so that it will be available for wider distribution to stakeholders.¹⁴ The Code's technical guidelines are also being prepared and printed in simple languages as means of enhancing dissemination. These initiatives supplement the work of many governments and NGOs that have taken steps to translate the Code into national languages. FAO estimates that the Code is now available in about 80 languages and as such it is the most widely translated FAO document.

- as a means of contributing to greater awareness about the Code of Conduct and deepening its dissemination, internet access on the FAO website has been promoted proactively even though it is recognized that many of the groups most in need of information about the Code and how to implement it are unlikely, for logistical and cost reasons, to have access to electronic communications.¹⁵
- FAO's national and regional offices have been supplied with stocks of the Code of Conduct and technical guidelines. These offices are aware how to access website information and are encouraged to request hard copies from FAO headquarters as and when required.
- training courses about the Code and its implementation are promoted both through FAO training initiatives and courses conducted by other organizations where FAO provides inputs.
- information about the Code, and especially with respect to its dissemination, is promoted when FAO staff undertake field travel and through their participation in national and international conferences.

Despite FAO's efforts to support the implementation of the Code of Conduct, the Organization is not in a position to ameliorate some of the more deep-seated information-related constraints that countries encounter. Realistically, these constraints can only be addressed:

- by countries through sustained and longer-term programs aimed at human resource development and institutional strengthening. For example, countries have identified problems such as inadequate data collection and analysis as being major constraints to fisheries management and the implementation of the Code. While FAO and the international donor community can assist countries enhance their capacities, the initiative and responsibility for such action rests with governments.

¹⁴ Importantly, and not surprisingly, an important impediment to the implementation of the Code of Conduct identified by countries is the high rates of illiteracy and low literacy in many developing countries. A decision not to translate the Code itself into local languages reflects the fact that the document is a legally orientated document and even if translated would be largely incomprehensible to many fishers and fish workers.

¹⁵ An enhanced and re-designed Code of Conduct webpage is currently being released.

- through the ongoing support of national and international information centers¹⁶. For example, countries have indicated to FAO that they lack information on key issues necessary for the implementation of the Code including poor information on the harmful impacts of environmentally unfriendly fishing gear¹⁷ and conversely, access to information on gear developments that promote more sustainable and responsible fisheries.

AVENUES FOR EXPANDED INFORMATION ACCESS

The need for access to accurate, neutral and timely fisheries information is essential if countries are to meet their obligations and requirements stemming from the adherence to international instruments and to implement responsible and sustainable practices in the fisheries sector. Against this backdrop has been the trend in many countries over the past decade to downgrade fisheries extension services and the role of information centers.

Extension services were, and indeed are, extremely important for the dissemination of fisheries information to fishers and fishing communities. These services are the vital information and contact link between government and stakeholders. However, in many developing countries, principally for cost and lack of profile reasons, extension services have been downgraded and assigned a lower funding priority. In developed countries, as fisheries services have moved progressively to user-pays cost-recovery administrations, extension services have been virtually disbanded. The void created by the downgrading of fisheries extension services has created a gap in information and technical support for fishers and needs to be filled.

In a parallel development over the last 10 to 15 years there has also been a reduction in the availability of information services in many fisheries administrations in developing countries and regional organizations located in the developing world. Many administrations and organizations that once boasted efficient staff and highly resourceful information centers now have publications piled in unused offices, unsorted, uncataloged, misplaced and deteriorating, attended by part-time secretarial staff and clerks who have other responsibilities and who have had no training relevant to information or information services apart from being able to use a computer. This situation has resulted from a combination of financial cut backs and competition for funds from new and expanded activities, with information services and training being a notable casualty.¹⁸ Contributing

¹⁶ In this paper information centers refers to libraries and other institutional means for the dissemination of information.

¹⁷ In the context of the use of turtle excluder devices (TEDs). This matter is a “bread and butter” issue for many developing countries exporting prawns as important overseas markets can be closed.

¹⁸ In some instances the international donor community has recognized the general deterioration in information services in developing countries and has put in place national and regional programs to counteract the degradation. An example of such a programme is Ocean Data and Information

and compounding the problem has been the mistaken belief, widely promoted internationally, that information services and hard-copy print documents could be replaced by internet access.¹⁹

Given these developments and the need for reliable, quality and timely information to support the implementation of the Code of Conduct, information professionals have a central role to play in supporting countries, and in particular developing countries, in their efforts to gain access to the information they need to promote the fuller implementation of the Code. In assessing what role they can play and how they might they fulfill it in an environment where change is rapid and the rule rather than the exception, information professionals and the centers they serve should attempt to look beyond traditional means of contact for the dissemination of information and, in so doing, seek to identify and work with new constituent groups.

In conventional information retrieval and dissemination systems there are usually a small number of well-defined, clearly identified institutional user groups that are, for mandate and historical reasons, the focus of work. These groups, sometimes referred to as the 'big three', include governments, research institutions and universities. However, bearing in mind that the implementation of the Code foresees wider stakeholder involvement and recognizing that the establishment of initial interfaces will not be easy, information

Network for Africa (ODINAFRICA), funded by government of Flanders, Belgium. ODINAFRICA brings together marine institutions from 25 African Members of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC)/UNESCO. The earlier phases of ODINAFRICA enabled Members to access data available from other data centers worldwide, to develop skills for manipulation of data and preparation of data and information products and to develop infrastructure for archival, analysis and dissemination of the data and information products. Another initiative of this type is the Pacific Islands Marine Resources Information System (PIMRIS). Funded by the Government of Canada, it is a formal marine information networking system (of regional institutions and Pacific Island countries) devoted to the collection, storage, retrieval, and dissemination of information on fisheries and other living and non-living marine resources in the tropical Pacific. PIMRIS was established in recognition of the fact that a marine resources information system in the South Pacific is a crucial factor in providing access to information in the region. It has three additional participants: the Forum Fisheries Agency, the South Pacific Commission and the South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission. PIMRIS coordinates, collects and disseminates information on fisheries and non-living marine resources in the tropical Pacific. It helps government officers, institutes, research workers, librarians and information officers, fisheries officers, fishermen, students and general users by providing information on marine resources. In answer to requests PIMRIS can provide bibliographies, computer literature searches, current awareness services, information packages on tropical marine subjects, inter-library loans, library consultancies, reference services, and training and information management.

¹⁹ Frequently overlooked or discounted in debate and policy development relating to the dissemination of information through the internet is that for access and cost reasons such dissemination reaches primarily the most affluent social groups, excluding to a large part those groups falling outside the formal net. For this reason electronic distribution of information in developing countries, although important, is not a universal panacea for information dissemination.

professionals should seek to extend their range of services to support so-called ‘non-traditional’ users, going beyond the ‘big three’ include also the needs of industry, fishing communities, RFMOs, NGOs and consumers.²⁰ Very often centers of information excellence are not geared to interactions with non-traditional users and information professionals and centers are challenged to exercise creative and lateral thinking and policy development to enable them to extend their mandates and the scope of services.²¹

Finally, it should be noted that NGOs in developing countries are playing an important role in obtaining and disseminating fisheries information to support the implementation of the Code. In some countries, NGOs are offshoots from international organizations and, as a consequence, tend to have access to greater financial and technical resources than NGOs that are truly national in character.²² While filling a void where government services are lacking or have been withdrawn, NGOs have forged ties with poorer and more vulnerable groups of fishers and fish workers and the information they provide serves to promote and improve food security in particular and livelihood security in general. Notwithstanding these issues, NGOs could be a conduit for the passage of information from national and international information centers to dispersed stakeholders groups in developing countries.

SOME QUESTIONS FOR INFORMATION PROFESSIONALS

New games require new players or that existing players learn new rules. As information centers move in new directions to reach fisheries user groups that have not been served in the past by mainstream information centers, information professionals should consider addressing a number of important questions. While this paper does not purport to provide answers, it might be useful to reflect on the following issues:

²⁰ The issue of whether these groups should pay for the information services provided is an important issue that should be considered at an early stage but one that is beyond the scope of this paper. As a general policy the ability to pay principle should be exercised especially for industry, RFMOs, some NGOs etc. However, there should also be a ‘means test’ so that the poorest and most disadvantaged groups are not excluded because of their inability to pay.

²¹ There is a similar situation with respect to the role and activities of fisheries managers as they attempt to implement participatory approaches to management. The challenge for many managers is to shed their traditional training and focus in fisheries and management that until quite recently emphasized a centralized, top down approach in decisions making. Making the transition to an environment where decision making on management is shared and includes fishers and other stakeholders has proven to be a difficult task for many managers and has involved a steep learning curve.

²² Some national NGOs, despite the very high value of their work in supporting the implementation of the Code and promoting more responsible behavior and sustainable practices, face precarious financial positions and permanency in their operations.

- how are two-way communication channels opened between new user groups and information centers?
- how are user group information needs articulated and transmitted to information centers is it possible to differentiate clearly between the information needs of different stakeholder groups?
- how is it possible, in the logistical sense, to disseminate information to dispersed stakeholder groups?
- the situation of information centers in developing countries and their capacity to disseminate appropriate and timely fisheries information in support of the Code is of special concern to the international community.²³ Are there major differences between information centers in developing and developed countries and how they disseminate fisheries information, and if there are differences, should an effort be made to address them?
- what role can information centers play in supporting FAO's efforts to disseminate fisheries information; is this a new role for these centers, maybe a new paradigm or model?
- what views do information professionals have for meeting the challenges posed by the constraints faced in disseminating fisheries information as a means of broadening and deepening the implementation of the Code? Maybe information centers do not have a role in disseminating information to disperse, dislocated and often poor stakeholder groups.

The International Association of Aquatic and Marine Science Libraries and Information Centers (IAMSLIC) provides an excellent forum where the world's foremost information professionals have the opportunity to come together to discuss the types of questions raised in this paper. The issues and logistics underlying these questions are difficult but not considered to be insurmountable.

CONCLUSION

Many developing countries lack basic information to support the implementation of the Code of Conduct and a multi-pronged approach to addressing this deficiency would be highly desirable. Governments, possibly with the help of the international donor community and multilateral agencies, should seek to promote:

- longer-term programs to address information constraints stemming from a lack of domestic capacity to collect and analyze fisheries information;²⁴

²³ This concern is reflected to some extent in the Code itself and other international fisheries instruments.

²⁴ Many developing countries lack basic fisheries information such as current production levels by species, gear and area let alone more sophisticated information concerning the status of stocks, the precautionary ecosystem approaches in fisheries management. When the Code was being negotiated the issue of the need for quality information, while addressed narrowly in the Article 12

- the availability of quality and timely information for stakeholder groups from both national and international sources.

Some information centers are already disseminating information in support of the Code's implementation but to expand and intensify that role to focus on servicing new groups of users, the existing centers' mandates may need to be reviewed and amended. Additional resources to support and sustain this new mission would be required unless savings are possible from within existing activities.

The implementation of the Code of Conduct challenges information professionals and centers to grasp the opportunities to work with new stakeholder groups and to be part of the promotion of responsible and sustainable fisheries, especially in developing countries where information deficiencies are a major constraint. This will not be an easy task but one that will need to be done if poorer and often neglected groups of stakeholders are to be contacted, served better and if existing gaps in information availability are to be plugged. In this process information centers should be proactive and dynamic, forward and outward looking, seeking novel solutions and means to serve both existing client groups and those that have not yet been contacted to a great extent.

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concerning fisheries research, was largely overlooked. However, the impediments associated with the financial burden of fisheries research, the deficiency of well qualified technicians and scientists and the poorly functioning national and regional mechanisms for the systematic collection, analysis and verification of information were recognized in framing the provisions of the Code. Subsequently, the conclusion of the 2003 FAO Strategy for Improving Information on Status and Trends of Capture Fisheries within the framework of the Code of Conduct was an attempt to enhance the assembly and dissemination of information on the status and trends in fisheries (FAO 2003).

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